

8 FATHER-OF-THE-FOREST — This grand old tree is estimated to be about 2,000 years old and is only slightly smaller than the Santa Clara tree. During the early years of the campaign to save a representative example of primeval coast redwood forest, this particular tree was a popular subject for photographers who wanted to show the size and beauty of these trees. In 1902, public interest in coast redwoods led to the establishment of California Redwood Park, which is now known as Big Basin Redwoods State Park — the oldest unit in the California State Park System.

9 MOTHER-OF-THE-FOREST — This magnificent 329-foot-high tree is the tallest tree in Big Basin. Fire has hollowed out its base, but gradually, year after year, new growth tissue — the tree's cambium layer — has resulted in new layers of wood and bark so that the scars and openings are healing.

10 MADRONE — The shiny, magnolia-like leaves of this red-barked evergreen tree identify it as a madrone. It is a close relative to the huckleberry, which is also commonly found in the redwood forest. Madrones thrive in relatively cool, moist areas that nevertheless get full sunlight. The search for sunlight in this generally dark forest has resulted in the odd growth patterns seen here.

11 MEADOW — Written descriptions of this meadow during the 1870s refer to it as a wet bog. During the 1930s, however, the central part of the meadow was excavated and water piped in to create a swimming pool. More recently, the natural contours of this area were restored. Native plants are gradually getting established and the area is slowly recovering.

WILDLIFE NOTES

Many kinds of animals, birds, and insects live in this forest, but most of them are found only in the forest crown — far above the forest floor. Still, if you are lucky, you may see some wildlife here, including:

Black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus* subsp.)

These shy and graceful creatures have been an attraction here in Big Basin for many years. From 1902 until the 1930s, formal feeding times used to bring many deer into the area for easy viewing. Today, however, every effort is being made to preserve natural conditions and thereby enable park visitors to enjoy more of a wilderness experience. Visitors are asked not to feed or otherwise approach wild deer because their hooves and antlers can inflict serious wounds.

Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)

Most park visitors are familiar with the antics of this masked bandit. Raccoons live mostly in trees, but they like to have water nearby in which to bathe, forage, and moisten their food. Raccoons are active throughout the area from dusk to dawn, but are not often seen during the day.

Merriam chipmunk (*Eutamias merriami*)

This lively little animal can often be seen running along logs or at the base of trees. Watch for the overall rusty coloring and the striped upper sides, back, and head around the eyes. Note also the characteristic jerking movements of its tail each time it "chips".

Acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*)

Watch for this boldly colored bird in the trees. It flies from tree to tree in a rising and falling flight path. The black back, white spots on the wings, and peculiar "rack-up" call make it easy to identify.

Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)

This handsome, gregarious, and loud-voiced bird is most often seen on or near the ground foraging for scraps. It has a brilliantly blue body and nearly black head, neck, breast, and upper back. Look also for the crest of black head feathers which are raised when it is disturbed.

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)

This small brown bird has a distinctively black head and "cape." It can often be seen on or near the ground.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk around Big Basin's Redwood Trail. If you would like more information about the flora and fauna of Big Basin we hope you will visit the Nature Lodge and its fine natural history exhibits. Park staff members are also available to answer your questions. Daily naturalist walks and campfires programs are conducted during the summer season.

The Santa Cruz Mountains Natural History Association was formed in 1973 in order to provide new and improved educational and interpretive activities in state parks throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The association publishes and distributes many kinds of park-related publications, provides trained docents to staff the park's visitor centers, conducts guided walks and other special programs that explore both the natural and cultural history of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Membership in the Santa Cruz Mountains Natural History Association is open to all who are interested. For further information call 408-335-3174.



Department of Parks & Recreation

State of California — The Resources Agency
P.O. Box 942896 • Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

© 1989 California Department of Parks & Recreation

12-89

69 55272

REDWOOD TRAIL GUIDE

BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK



BIG BASIN REDWOODS

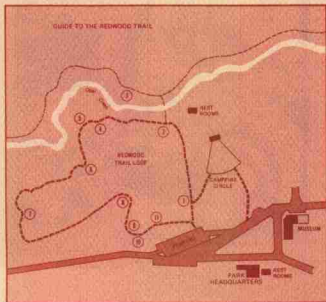


Welcome to Big Basin Redwoods State Park!

This trail passes by some of the biggest, most interesting, and most significant coast redwood trees in the Santa Cruz Mountains. It is six-tenths of a mile in length and generally takes about an hour to complete if you proceed at a leisurely pace. Numbers refer to locations of numbered posts along the trail. If a numbered post is missing, or if you have questions about the grove itself, please feel free to contact the park staff.

Over the years since Big Basin was declared a state park in 1902, this grove has been toured by several million people. Your experience, however, will be unique. The patterns of growth and decay, of sunlight and shadow, the sounds, and smells, and animal life of this ancient forest have never before been quite the way you are about to observe them.

Have a wonderful walk!



1 REDWOOD CRATER—Rounded depressions or craters like the one that can be seen here are common in the redwood region. These craters indicate that a large coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) stood here for centuries and was then destroyed. Unlike giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), which reproduces only by seed, coast redwoods reproduce both from seed and from stump sprouts. The redwood trees that surround this crater are offspring from the root structure of the parent tree. The larger ones are already centuries old.

2 OLD CRATER—Coast redwoods are experts at survival, but old age as well as fire, wind, and rain do eventually take their toll. Here several large trees have been felled by these forces. It should be noted, however, that the result is not disaster but a burst of new growth. Sunlight can now reach down through the forest canopy to the ground level where it results in a better growing environment for young trees and shrubs. Over the years, these fallen giants will remain right where they are, gradually decomposing and releasing their stored-up energy into the soil for future generations of forest plants and trees.

3 OPAL CREEK—Opal Creek is one of the major tributaries in the Waddell Creek watershed. It takes its name from the cloudy appearance of its water which is caused by suspended minerals and decaying plant matter. Over the centuries, Opal Creek has occasionally overflowed its banks, depositing rich layers of silt and creating ideal growing conditions for many of the plants that are commonly found on the floor of this forest, including sword and Woodwardia fern, huckleberry, and western azalea.

Directly across Opal Creek is the Santa Clara Tree. Damaged at the top and not exceptionally tall at 240 feet, this tree is 17 feet in diameter and contains an estimated 240,000 board feet of lumber—enough to build several houses.

4 TANBARK OAK—The oak-like, evergreen trees here in this immediate area are tan oaks (or tanbark oaks). Along with California's other oak trees, tan oak acorns were an important source of food for the Ohlone Indians who occupied this area. Tan oaks were also important to the first permanent European settlers in Big Basin. They did not bother with the acorns, however. Instead, they stripped off the bark and hauled it to Santa Cruz where it was processed to yield tannic acid, large quantities of which were used in the leather tanning industry.

5 REDWOOD BURL—Burls are a common sight throughout the coast redwood forest. Most authorities describe burlwood as consisting of masses of dormant buds. The peculiar protuberances around the trunk of this tree, once called the Animal or Zoo Tree, were once thought to resemble animals one might see in a zoo. The attractive, glossy-leaved shrubs in this area are mostly huckleberry.

6 CHIMNEY TREE—The Chimney Tree is a testimonial to the durability of coast redwoods. This tree—a living, growing redwood—is entirely hollow from base to top. It is theorized that several successive fires over the years ignited the tree's heartwood, and this burning eventually created a perfect flue or chimney effect. One tree in this part of the forest is recorded to have smoldered and burned for 14 months before the fire died out.

Redwoods are quite able to resist many of the effects of fire, but they are not always able to survive. Directly behind you next to the trail is the charred hulk of a very large redwood that was finally overwhelmed by the accumulated damage of repeated fires.

You have now covered half of the Redwood Trail and will soon turn in the direction of the park headquarters and the parking lot.

7 DOUGLAS-FIR—Shade tolerant and commonly associated with the redwood forest, Douglas-fir is one of the most important timber trees in the United States. It grows almost as fast as the coast redwood and does get to be quite large—six or even eight feet in base diameter—but does not have as long a lifespan. Unlike coast redwoods, large Douglas-firs are vulnerable to various kinds of fungus and are apt to be overthrown by wind. The light brown cones of this tree, three to four inches long, are easily identified by the three-pointed bracts between the cone scales.

